SPURGEON’S MEN: THE RESURGENCE
OF BAPTIST BELIEF AND PRACTICE
IN TASMANIA 1869-1884

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
University of Tasmania
March 2011
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Laurence Frederick Rowston, March 2011

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Laurence Frederick Rowston, March 2011
ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to explain why a number of men from Spurgeon’s College, London, started arriving in Tasmania in 1869 to begin a new phase of Baptist work. It considers their impact on the lives of previously established Nonconformist churches and the ramifications of their association of churches formed in 1884. This thesis argues that a rebirth of the Baptist life and conviction began with the influx of these men from the Pastors’ College in London.

The work of the Strict and Particular Baptists had begun in the 1830s, but the churches under the care of the Rev Henry Dowling were sectarian in their outlook and made few gains. Their decline, to a certain extent, mirrored the eclipse of the Hyper-Calvinist Baptists in England. The arrival of Alfred William Grant in July 1869 was the first of many from the Pastors’ College. A further influx of men from the College, which began in earnest at the end of 1879, was assisted greatly by the visits to the colony of Spurgeon’s son, the Rev Thomas Spurgeon. By now their renewed Baptist theology and their rediscovery of mission broke free from entrenched patterns. They consolidated what they saw as their gains in 1884 with the formation of the Baptist Union of Tasmania. The venture was significantly assisted over three decades by the Gibson family of Perth. This thesis seeks to assess the decline of the Particular Baptists in Tasmania and the rise of the evangelical Baptists under the Spurgeon banner.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the help and advice of my principal supervisor, Dr Tom Dunning, Head of the History and Classics Department of the University of Tasmania, who gave me patience and understanding; Dr Stefan Petrow who carefully read the thesis and made helpful suggestions; Dr Richard Ely and Susan Patterson, MA, for their diligent proof reading of the thesis and helpful suggestions. I also acknowledge the ever-helpful staff at the Reference section of the State Library of Tasmania; the Archives Office of Tasmania; Whitley College Library at the Baptist College, Parkville, Victoria; the Special/Rare Collections of the University of Tasmania, and the Joint Theological Library in Melbourne (now the Dalton McCaughey Library) and David Woodruff, Librarian of the Strict Baptist Historical Society in Dunstable who was so helpful on my visit. Alfred W Grant’s descendent, Peter Grant, provided an extensive archive of newspaper cuttings from his AW Grant collection which formed the basis of chapter four.
CONTENTS

Abstract  i
Acknowledgments  ii
Contents  iii
Abbreviations  vii
Introduction  1

Chapter 1 - The Demise of the Particular Baptists in Tasmania
  Introduction  20
  Launceston in the 1800s  20
  The Christian Mission Church and the Launceston Tabernacle  22
  Hyper-Calvinism and Closed Communion at York Street chapel  25
  The Hobart and Deloraine Chapels  36
  The Gibsons and the York Street Chapel  40
  Conclusion  41

Chapter 2 - The Baptist Benefactors
  Introduction  43
  Mary Ann Gibson  43
  Anna Maria Blackler and Ellinthorpe Hall, Van Diemen’s Land  45
  David and Elizabeth Gibson  47
  William and Mary Ann Gibson’s early Married Life  49
  The Congregationalists’ Benefactors, Henry and Sarah Hopkins  57
  Conclusion  59

Chapter 3 – The Influence of CH Spurgeon and His College
  Introduction  60
Nineteenth Century London 60
The Metropolitan Tabernacle 63
Publications 65
The Pastor's College 66
Financial Support 69
Staffing and Student Lodging 70
College Accommodation 71
The Evening Classes 72
Pastor's College Educational Priorities 73
Curriculum 78
Numbers 79
Church Planting 81
Farewells 84
Conclusion 85

Chapter 4 - The First of Spurgeon's Students in Tasmania
   Introduction 87
   Mary Ann Gibson and Spurgeon’s Sermons 87
   The Appointment of William Alfred Grant 88
   Dawson Street Baptist, Ballarat, and Beyond 94
   The Content and Style of Grant's Lectures and Sermons 104
   Conclusion 110

Chapter 5 – Spurgeon’s Men and Tuberculosis
   Introduction 112
   The Itinerant Methodists, Congregationalists and Others 112
   Spurgeon’s Men and the Scourge of Tuberculosis 117
   The Difficulty in Finding Suitable Meeting Places and Difficulties with Housing 131
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6 - Disputes about Baptism</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists in Van Diemen’s Land</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert McCullough at Longford</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disputes over Baptism in the Kentish Area</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Baptist–Methodist Dispute in Burnie of 1899</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 7 - Tasmanian Baptists and Higher Criticism</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Spurgeon and Higher Criticism</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The Bible is our Only Guide’ for Tasmanian Baptists</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freethinkers in Tasmania</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Lily Soundy Rejoicing in Old Truths</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘Down Grade’ Controversy and the Visit of Dr John Clifford</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Differences Between Tasmania and South Australia Baptists</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 8 - The Formation of an Association</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Formation of the Baptist Union of Tasmania</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rise of Nonconformist Associations in Tasmania</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associations among Baptists in Great Britain</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Associations among Australian Baptists</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Gibsons’ Latter years  184
The Subsequent Ventures of the Tasmanian Baptist Association  188
Conclusion  195
Conclusion  197
Appendices:
   A  Map of Launceston in 1885  205
   B  Map of Tasmania with place names  206
   C  Spurgeon’s College Students in Tasmania  207

Bibliography  209
ABBREVIATIONS

DH  Devon Herald
LEx  Launceston Examiner
S&T  Sword and Trowel
SB  Southern Baptist
THRA  Tasmanian Historical Research Association
TSA  Tasmanian State Archives